

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

During a conversation with outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev this weekend, you indicated you would “have more flexibility” to deal with issues relating to missile defense after the election this November. Not having to worry about the judgment of the American people on this important national security issue may allow more flexibility to make concessions to the Russians, but it would be antithetical to our safety and security and would be counter to other assurances you have given to the American people and their representatives in Congress on this important issue. We demand an immediate clarification that, if re-elected in November, you will honor your commitments on our missile defense programs.

For example, to secure Senate support for the New START treaty, you pledged in your message to the Senate on the New START treaty to continue development and deployment of all stages of the Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense in Europe, including qualitative and quantitative improvements to such systems. Is that still your commitment or might you be considering agreements that would limit the speed and range of U.S. missile defense systems deployed on naval vessels and in Europe?

As many senators warned during consideration of New START, Russia sought to include a missile defense linkage in the treaty as a means to limit our missile defense capabilities. We objected to that linkage at the time, and we will continue to do so, notwithstanding any “flexibility” you think you may gain with your possible re-election. We would also remind you that the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act places limitations on your ability to share classified missile defense information with Russia. We caution that any attempt to treat this provision as non-binding, as you claimed in your signing statement, could have serious repercussions.

You also emphasized, in a speech at Seoul’s Hankuk University, your commitment to further reduce America’s nuclear stockpile, telling the audience that you “can already say with confidence that we have more nuclear weapons than we need.” We do not believe that confidence is shared by military planners. During testimony on the New START Treaty, the then-commander of U.S. Strategic Command told the Senate that “the arsenal that we have is exactly what is needed today to provide the deterrent.” In light of this comment – and the fact that your administration is still engaged in a study of our nuclear forces – it would certainly seem premature, and quite possibly incorrect, to claim that we can further reduce our nuclear arsenal. This is especially so given that reductions to even New START force levels were predicated on the successful completion of a nuclear modernization program that has lost your full support and now appears delayed.

Mr. President, you went to Seoul ostensibly to attend the Nuclear Security Summit and deal with one of today's most serious dangers – nuclear weapons falling in the hands of terrorists. We agree that this needs to be a priority, and we will support you in these efforts where we can. The continued pursuit of reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, however, distracts from this important task – and could likely engender the very instability you hope to avoid. Likewise, limiting our missile defense capability is likely to weaken our capacity to deal with nuclear dangers posed by long-range missiles in the hands of states like North Korea and Iran.

For these reasons, we will oppose any efforts by your administration to arbitrarily limit our missile defense capabilities or pursue ill-advised nuclear arms reductions.

Sincerely,

Tom Kuhl

John Cornyn

Bob Bennett

Ray Bailey Hutchinson

John Barrasso

Lawrence Oates

Rouven

John H. Brown

John Shivers

Mike McConnell

Richard Shelby

Pat Roberts

Ben

John McLeod

David Finch
Sally Chenebli

Rob Robb

Forrest

William

Baron

Tom

John Borgman

Tom Parker

Jim DeMott

Ray Johnson

Tom Moran

Clara Kim

Richard A. Sugar

John

W.D. (FL)

Paul Allen

Mike Cuyper

Kelly Grotte

Michael B. Eiji

Jefferson

Susan Collins

Alan Hill

Mike

Olympic J. Snow

Chuck Gravelly

William D. Hatch

Joe Hall
